



An Educational Psychology of Methods in Multicultural Education

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Foreword

In the wide and diverse world of writing about multiculturalism, there are many voices seeking our ears, attention, empathy, and humanistic understanding of cultural diversity in today's pluralistic society. What makes this book so appealing to prospective and current multicultural educators is the way it is carefully crafted to help both students and teachers learn, share, understand, and live the values and benefits of multicultural education. Christopher Vang presents multicultural perspectives through a broad array of lenses. His work of synthesis makes this book a brilliantly lucid, splendidly readable, admirably impressive, and most fascinating study of multicultural education.

Vang knows deeply and intimately how diverse students would feel about learning from teachers of similarly broad backgrounds and how teachers would feel about teaching students who do not possess singularly White, middle-class values. In this book, the emphasis upon both the psychosocial and the educational psychology dimensions helps educators understand the feeling tone of teaching and learning by revealing comprehensive pedagogical applications, instructional approaches, and sociocultural paradigms that are responsive to today's multicultural education settings.

Certainly, the field of multicultural education has been fortunate to have some significant and widely renowned stars like Sleeter, Nieto, West, Said, the Lees, the Banks, and McLaren, just to credit a scant few. But from within the Hmong and Southeast Asian community, there have been few scholars equal to the caliber of Christopher Vang. Representing the experience of Southeast Asians, and especially for the Hmong community, Vang offers a new, vibrant, and articulate voice supporting the educational needs of this unique group of diverse students.

The Hmong are special for many reasons. Their nomadic history traces roots to ancient China, and possibly before that in Southern Mongolia. The history of this people is scant because the Chinese denied them their rights to maintain written language, freedom, social justice, equal opportunity, and sociopolitical advancement in order to suppress their growth and development as a people. Given the great expanse of time, perhaps as far back as 2000 BC, it is inconceivable to think of the experiences these people had to endure as the lack of a written history has kept many historians unaware of this people's past. Conveyed almost exclusively through an oral and pictorial

history, the Hmong story is only now being revealed in academic and curricular settings.

In the past 50 years, the Hmong have been re-developing their written language, and their culture reflects a diverse amalgam of several dialects (White, Blue, Green, etc.) corresponding to family clans and local Laotian origins. Despite this diversity within the Hmong culture, the Hmong share a common bond with the United States military, the State Department, and especially with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The fact that the Hmong were allies of the United States in the Vietnam War, known as the Secret War's Special Guerrillas Unit (SGU) in Laos, and that they suffered huge losses in support of American troops to rescue American downed pilots in the jungle of Laos, Americans owe the Hmong a great debt and gratitude. In partial re-payment for that support, approximately 60,000 Hmong were brought to the U.S. to be spared political execution, persecution, imprisonment, and extermination by the communist genocide of Cambodians and Laotians after America's departure from Southeast Asia in 1975.

Christopher Vang is one of the thousands of children of Hmong refugees who immigrated to America in the past 35 years through the Hmong refugee resettlement in the Western nations. Speaking only Hmong, Chris lived with his parents and attended American public schools. As he grew, he learned English, and he observed the opportunities available to those pursuing higher education. Vang's intellectual curiosity has been rewarding for both his family and himself. Christopher Vang is currently one of a select few Hmong who have earned a doctorate in higher education.

Vang's true talent is in his ability to describe other Southeast Asians and the Hmong people and to identify their needs to our public school educators. His presentation of the educational psychology of the Southeast Asian students is a boon for any educator eager to explore the uniquely conflicted situation that first-, second-, and third-generation Hmong students experience. Vang knows firsthand experiences of what works with these students, and he carefully describes the teaching methodology best situated for successful relationship building and educational outcomes. This insight has wide applicability for any multicultural educator.

I am proud to introduce Christopher Vang's scholarship achievements as represented by this insightful and well-researched collection. As a long time friend of education and of using the learning process to promote social justice, Vang offers the reader considerable insight through grounded knowledge in issues related to critical pedagogy, psychosocial dimension, instructional strategy, and sociocultural paradigm. Vang's gift is his sensitive

voice for the acceptance and engagement of all diverse people in today's pluralistic and multicultural settings.

Therefore, I am honored to recommend his book to all prospective and current educators who are working with children of diverse backgrounds in the public school system. The practical information in this book will benefit both teachers and students in the learning circle.

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Preface

As the planet evolves, the multiracial force of mankind is emerging into a new universe, encompassing cultural diversity from all countries of the world. This book, *An Educational Psychology of Methods in Multicultural Education*, was written to help prospective educators address socio-cultural questions, ideas, issues, and curiosities they encounter in multicultural education. This book was designed to appeal to all educators and is based on the premise that the United States of America is a multilingual and multicultural nation made up of people of culturally, economically, religiously, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Differences in race, ethnicity, culture, religion, social class, and socio-economic status call for comprehensive multicultural education—not only for students, but also for teachers. Today’s pre-service and in-service educators—teachers, administrators, parents, and teacher candidates—need to understand how students of various cultures feel, learn, understand, and behave in elementary and secondary schools as well as how these students adjust and adapt to the mainstream society in the communities where they live. The information in this book will lead educators in exploring the socio-cultural issues of cultural diversity and multiculturalism.

What Is Educational Psychology?

Educational psychology invests great interests in learning, knowing, and understanding the applications of scientific methods involving teaching and learning to the study of the behaviors of people in instructional settings. In this book, educational psychology focuses on how teachers and learners feel about the complexities of teaching and learning in a multicultural setting where cultural diversity plays a big role in how teachers teach and how students learn.

What Is in This Book for Educators?

This book is designed for everybody. Here is why: Multicultural education theorists and researchers advocate for *all* students, maintaining that cultural diversity enriches the nation and that educators who learn, understand, and know the underlying psychological issues of multicultural education have a

better understanding of *all* people. Understanding differences in race, ethnicity, religion, class, socioeconomic status, language, culture, values, customs, and traditions enables teachers to elevate the socialization process to obtain a higher level of acceptance and respect for *all* people. Multicultural education employs different paradigms and frameworks to promote social justice and seek opportunities, restructuring, changes, and approaches that minimize negative impacts related to diversity in the education of all students. At the same time, multicultural curricula aim for fair practices to maximize educational opportunities, career possibilities, and equal access to quality public education for all.

The U.S. has nearly 300 million people, and the number of diverse people from different cultures and indigenous groups is projected to increase in the next few decades. Consider languages, for example. In 2006 the National Education Association reported that approximately 425 dialects other than English are spoken by elementary and secondary students in American public schools. Multicultural education experts and researchers predict that diverse cultural groups will grow at different rates over the next two decades. According to Manning and Baruth (2009) and Banks (2008), the Hispanic student population will outnumber the student population of African Americans and European Americans because of high birth rates and cultural preservation. If the trends continue, Hispanics student will soon be the majority, and the descendants of European Americans and African Americans will be the minority. Similarly, the Asian-American student population is increasing dramatically. Recent influxes of immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asian nations—Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam—will add more racially heterogeneous ingredients to the cultural diversity of America.

Moreover, Arab-American students have begun to show a noticeable increase in number in recent years. In California's public schools, growing numbers of these students enrolled in K-12 classrooms present challenges for school teachers and administrators. Students from India who speak Punjabi, Hindi, or Urdu also bring rich cultural heritages into the school culture; however, these groups of students need more teachers who share their ancestries and cultural backgrounds. As with Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese students, the presence of Arab-American students and students from non-European cultures demonstrates that public schools need to grow their own teachers to help these students; otherwise, students of color may be subject to lip service, capricious teaching, cosmetic education, surface-level assessment, and impoverished curricula.

Scholars of multicultural education, such as Banks (2008) and Dillon (2006), have reported that the number of students of color has already ex-

ceeded the number of mainstream American students in six states: California, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Texas. Banks further noted that the proportion of students of color in American schools doubled in the 30 years between 1973 and 2004, from 22% to 43%. Banks also observed that ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity is increasing in all segments of American life, including communities, K-12 schools, colleges, and universities.

Today's Challenges and Their Implications

Undoubtedly, cultural diversity poses serious challenges, complexities, opportunities, and perhaps, cross-cultural obstacles for today's educators. However, people working with students of color need to move away from the "melting pot" concept proposed in the 1950s and 1960s because it does not accurately depict the socialization of the diverse population in the U.S. currently. In fact, according to experts in multicultural education, this futile concept has been replaced with the notion of cultural pluralism. Banks (2008) referred to this replacement as a paradigm shift. De Villar (1994) noted that this paradigm shift requires a new socio-academic framework.

People have difficulty letting go of their cultural heritages when living in the U.S. and becoming Americanized. Societal assimilation is unnecessary and has negative consequences. People of diverse backgrounds can adopt the values of the mainstream society and live the American dream while maintaining their cultures and traditions. Hmong Americans, for example, embrace a socialization process they call *accommodation*—acculturation without assimilation. This process enables them to preserve their cultural heritage. In other words, Hmong Americans have learned to accept American values—those of middle-class European Americans—while maintaining their own, thus building cross-cultural competency in schools, communities, and workplaces.

Today, people see the U.S. as a multilingual and multicultural nation with a heterogeneous mixture of cultural characteristics, much like a salad bowl. All kinds of unique cultures are displayed, like the colors of the rainbow. In this salad bowl, American society is open to change, provides opportunity, and offers a high standard of living.

Critics of diversity and of multicultural education might view the differences among people as negatives that need to be eradicated through assimilation and enculturation, as in the melting pot model. This way of thinking is narrow-minded. Cultural diversity has enriched the fabric of U.S. society in so many ways that one cannot imagine the country without the richness and

strengths of its different peoples. Of course, this fact cannot erase racism, discrimination, bigotry, prejudice, stereotyping, and hatred from the minds of people who are ethnically, religiously, and racially encapsulated (Banks, 2008). But experts in multicultural education feel that celebrating cultural diversity brings unity, understanding, sensitivity, awareness, compassion, and empathy. When different voices come together, society is the better.

Recognizing and celebrating differences are only the first steps toward enriching society through formal understanding and schooling. This author agrees with Manning and Baruth (2009) and Banks (2008) that consistent, significant, comprehensive, and deliberate efforts are needed to promote a total-school approach to the delivery of instruction in multicultural education for all students in the 21st century.

All educational institutions should foster positive attitudes toward multicultural education. Educators can play a vital role in teaching students of color and mainstream American students how to demonstrate acceptance, appreciation, and respect for all cultures. To develop effective curricula that reflect sensitivity to cultural diversity, public schools need to move beyond present academic boundaries that focus on Anglo-centric curricula. Most importantly, public schools should avoid hidden and null curricula since their hegemonic principles are culturally and academically detrimental to the education of all students.

Multiculturalism is undeniable today. Look at our sports, politics, schools, restaurants, neighborhoods, religious denominations, and communities. Each of us is one of many. However, we still have homogeneous communities as well as heterogeneous communities. Each cultural group has its own niche in which it keeps its culture and traditions alive. But by far, people are moving away from xenophobic attitudes and embracing multicultural attitudes, moving eventually to pluralism.

The big question in education is: How are teachers feeling about dealing and working with students of diverse abilities and needs? How do teachers feel about teaching students of color who do not possess middle-class American values? How do teachers feel about their inability to speak different languages? How do teachers feel about themselves and their ability to set students up for either success or failure? Another important question is: How do children of color feel about being in the classroom with teachers with whom they are barely able to communicate? These are some tough questions, but they are part of professional psychological profiling.

The goal of this book is to promote fair multicultural education for all students by presenting and illustrating the psycho-social dimensions of the socio-cultural issues related to educational foundations and conceptualiza-

tions, the socialization process, curricula, teaching methodologies, and communication with diverse parents. I hope the contents of this book will serve as a guiding light that leads prospective educators through the steps of devising cultural models of acceptance, appreciation, and respect for students from different cultural backgrounds, including European Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans, Asian Americans, and Southeast Asian Americans.

My Reason for Writing This Book

I am passionate about this topic because of my experiences teaching college courses in multicultural and multilingual education in a multiple-subject credential program. I want future educators to have comprehensive knowledge of the seven major cultural groups in the American public schools today as well as skills for teaching them. Cultural diversity is still relatively new to many pre-service and in-service professionals even though they are entering the teaching profession to become classroom teachers in a pluralistic society. Their feelings about cultural diversity are very important as those feelings will play a significant role in how they perceive students with language and cultural barriers to learning. For instance, many student teachers from the Midwest do not live in diverse communities. These individuals may lack firsthand contact experiences, an understanding of multicultural education, cross-cultural competencies, psycho-social information, and background knowledge of specific cultures. Yet they will more likely than not be called upon to teach students who are culturally different from themselves. Meeting the academic needs of all students can be tremendously difficult because teaching students with diverse abilities and diverse needs is always a challenging task.

This book presents various components of multicultural education programs and curricula that are responsive to the academic needs of all students. The goal of this book is to expand the psycho-social horizons of educators and to make sure that the school curricula, instructional strategies, methodologies, materials, settings, personnel, and academic practices reflect the diversity of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Significance of All Cultural Groups

Each culture is unique and special and has its own way of expressing its cultural characteristics. Describing every culture in America is literally possible, but time and space do not permit. This book focuses on the seven major

groups—European Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans, Asian Americans, and Southeast Asian Americans. Each major group contains subgroups and thus intra-cultural diversity. Multicultural education experts and researchers agree that these groups have the highest number of children in today's schools and that their numbers will continue to increase. By writing about these groups, my intention is to promote greater understanding of cultural diversity and, at the same time, motivate educators to study and explore the cultural dynamics and characteristics of other cultures. For instance, teachers in schools with Punjabi students need to understand the culture and traditions of these people, who may speak one or more of three different dialects—Punjabi, Hindi, or Urdu.

Limitations of This Book

I realize that in limiting discussion to the seven major cultural groups and their subgroups, some groups are not represented. In addition, all cultural background information presented may not truly portray the actual heritages of a specific group. Some discussions may risk provoking generalizations, stereotyping, and negative connotations. Even though the information in this book is based on current research from experts in the field of multicultural education, the assumptions of each cultural group may not be accurately explained as the research was limited to available ethnographic data. Therefore, I encourage you to consider that one of the best ways to validate this information regarding cultural characteristics of children of color is to engage in in-depth study and/or firsthand experience, such as ethnographic observations and documentation. Check with experts on specific cultures to clarify and enhance your knowledge of any specific cultural issues.

Keep in mind that multicultural issues are sensitive, and any inappropriate misapplication of cultural information could result in undesired consequences.

How This Book Is Organized

This book contains five parts organized into 14 chapters. Each part presents a different domain with a variety of topical issues. Part One has three chapters and introduces broad topics related to the concepts of multilingual and multicultural education and the psycho-social dimensions of cultural diversity. Part Two has seven chapters and reviews the cultural characteristics of each ethnic group, giving a comprehensive overview of the group's cultural char-

acteristics. Part Three has one chapter and discusses topical issues related to the characteristics of at-risk students. Part Four has two chapters and focuses on topical issues related to curricula and approaches in response to the goals of multicultural education. Finally, Part Five has one chapter that explores meaningful means of communication between schools and parents.

Acknowledgments

This book could not have been written without the expertise of Dr. Greg Goodman. Dr. Goodman is the instrumental editor for this book. The author of this book is indebted to Dr. Goodman for his invaluable contributions and scholarship as well as his kindness, friendship, and mentoring.

Special appreciation goes to Mr. Christopher Myers, the Manager of Marketing for Peter Lang Publishing. His encouragement has made this book possible and given the author the momentum to complete it.

A Personal Note

This book is based on my experience teaching multicultural and multilingual education courses in a multiple-subject credential program. It reflects my passion for teaching college courses—Methods in Multilingual Education, Foundations of Education in a Diverse Society, Health and Science Methodologies, and Classroom Management and Professional Practices. My professional development guided me in creating the conceptual framework for this book.

In addition, my observations, firsthand experience, and personal multilingual and multicultural background inspired me to put my thoughts into a book that will help educators because I understand the inadequacies of our educational system in providing and advocating for the needs of students of diverse cultural backgrounds. This book will not be the last one I write about issues related to the psycho-social dimensions of multicultural education; this is what I love to do.